



# THE CURRENT STATUS OF CONNECTING AND INFORMATION SHARING AMONG LIBRARIES IN VIETNAM

Nguyen Van Thien

Ph. D., Hanoi University of Culture

## ABSTRACT

This article interprets the connecting and information sharing among libraries; Study and evaluate the current status of connecting and information sharing among libraries in Vietnam; Analyze some connecting and information sharing models among libraries in Asia and worldwide; Suggest the solution to increase the ability of connecting and information sharing between libraries in Vietnam.

**KEYWORDS:** Library connection; Information sharing; Library cooperation; Vietnam.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0), with the remarkable achievements of science and technology such as digital technology platform, big data, artificial intelligence, Internet of things (IoT), which has caused impacts to all library information activities. In the context of strong digital transformation, libraries in the world as well as in Vietnam are being transformed from the traditional model to the modern model. There are differences in modern library activities, including connecting and sharing information. According to D. Jotwani [3], modern libraries do not operate independently, it is a space which connects libraries and creates new knowledge and high interactive services between users and libraries. This interaction is through both real space and virtual space also.

In fact, the connecting and information sharing among libraries has been mentioned in varied definitions and terms such as: library connection, library cooperation, library association, library interconnection, etc. The connotations of these definitions and terms are containing similarities about library collaboration. However, there are also differences when we focus on the different sides of cooperation.

The Vietnam Law on Library [6] promulgated in 2019 defines the connecting and information sharing as library interconnection. In which, focus on conn and cooperating between libraries in order to rationally and effectively use the information resources, library utilities, information resource processing results, library information products and library services. Article 29 of this law also mentioned in details the library interconnection in many aspects, such as: interconnection content, method and mechanism.

There are many factors that ensure the connecting and information sharing among libraries, in which focusing on two main conditions as below:

- + Technical conditions and standards to ensure the connection.
- + Connection mechanism conditions (agreement between libraries).

Nowadays, information sharing connection among libraries is considered as an inevitable trend and a feature of modern libraries also. The connecting and information sharing can be official or unofficial cooperation and agreement among libraries. Official connections are usually implemented via memorandum of understandings, contracts, or agreements, etc. among libraries. Unofficial connections can be established with the help of technology. For example, agreements are not required when using open protocol suites to connect systems. Library connection serves various purposes, according to the library's purposes of joining. In particular, the main focus is usually sharing information, saving resources, enhancing the competitiveness of the library compared to other information supply channels. Today, the library's operating environment is changed rapidly, the connecting and information sharing that helps libraries increasing their ability to adapt to the rapid changes in operational environment as well as perform their new missions in developing process.

In recent decades, libraries in Vietnam have made strong developments following the direction of technology application; however, the connection and information sharing among libraries still has many limitations; we need to define and suggest the corrective solutions, which is also the goal of this article.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

For doing this research, the author uses these following methods:

- *Analysis and synthesis:* The author inherited the related previous works, on the meta-analysis of the included studies.
- *Social investigation:* By surveys and interviews.

To determine the current status of modernization, connecting and information sharing in the libraries in Vietnam, the author conducted a questionnaire survey at nearly 80 libraries. The survey sample is selected according to the principle of stratification because of the differences of survey subjects, choosing different types of libraries, such as: university, public, and specialized. The survey locations cover the North, Central and South regions of Vietnam. The survey subjects are library management staff and leaders; Staff working in the library. The author has interviewed some of state management officers in the field of library information; libraries managers; Library staff.

## 3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

### - The status of connecting and information sharing among libraries in Vietnam

The survey result shows that major libraries in Vietnam have been concentrating the resources to develop libraries following modern models. To realize the modernization goal, libraries in Vietnam have invested in developing modern IT infrastructure including hardware (computers, equipments), software and network systems. There are 100% of libraries having Internet connection, 83% of libraries having their own server system for installing software to serve professional activities. Many libraries and learning resource centers have invested in tens of servers. 100% of the surveyed libraries have a workstation system for librarians and readers to exploit information. These libraries with hundreds of workstations are concentrated in resource centers or libraries of major universities.

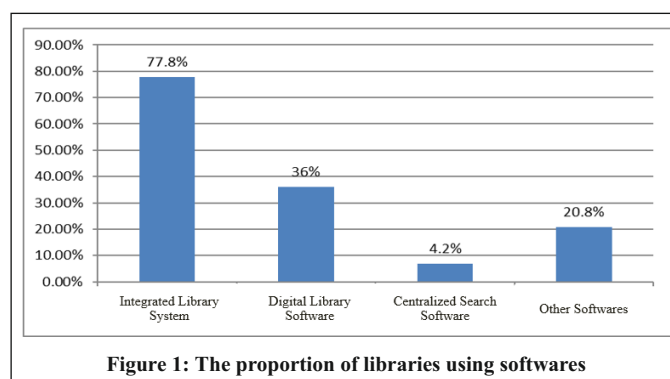


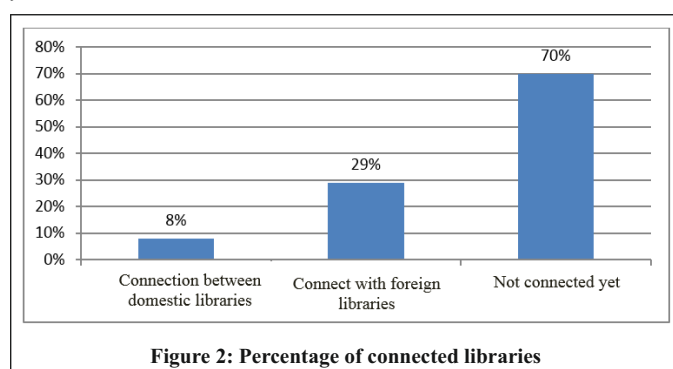
Figure 1: The proportion of libraries using softwares

Besides the investment on the computer systems, the survey result shows that libraries in Vietnam have been applied many different softwares in activity management. The survey data shows that 78% of libraries have applied Integrated Library Systems - ILS. These are the software systems having the capable of comprehensively implementing the management functions of libraries in the direction of automation. 36% of the surveyed libraries have applied digital library software to manage and build full-text databases and digital collections. This result shows that investing in building and developing digital libraries is a trend in the large libraries in Vietnam today. Centralized search is a new software in the field of library information; however, by the time of the survey in Vietnam, there are 7% of surveyed libraries have chosen and applied.

By analyzing the current status of the investments in Vietnam library IT infrastructures, it can be seen that large libraries in Vietnam have been changing drastically. Modern library model with applying technology has been deployed in many places and has achieved remarkable achievements. Many libraries are equipped with basic modern library management systems such as ILS, digital library software, centralized search software. In which, the ILS has been equipped popularly, all libraries have been connected to the Internet.

With the current information technology and communication infrastructure, it basically ensures good connection and information sharing among libraries in Vietnam. However, the actual survey result on the connection and information sharing among libraries in Vietnam shows that they are at a very low level, not commensurate with the invested infrastructure.

The statistics in Figure 1 shows that 78% of the surveyed libraries have applied ILS into the professional activity management. With this system, libraries can use open protocol to connect its database with other libraries to search, exchange bibliographic or copy cataloguing. However, the statistics in Figure 2 show that nearly 70% of libraries have not done interconnection yet, 29% have connected to foreign libraries, only 8% of domestic libraries are connected with each other. The primary purposes of the interconnected libraries are to do copy cataloguing. Due to the constraints on copyright and intellectual property rights, the interconnection of digital library systems to share full-text documents has not been done yet.



This result shows that the information sharing connection among libraries in Vietnam is at a very low level. This is a major limitation because since the last decades of the last century, the general trend of libraries around the world is always ready to connect and exchange information, especially bibliographic information. The proof is that libraries are always ready to share, even widely on the internet, the parameters that respond to the installation of interconnection open protocol, for example: parameters for installing the Z39.50 protocol. Nowadays, in Vietnam, there are few libraries willing to share these parameters, so it leads to a practice that from the perspective of connecting and sharing information, libraries in Vietnam are developing quite independently. Connecting and sharing information among Vietnamese libraries is even more difficult than with foreign libraries.

With the current status of connecting and sharing information among libraries in Vietnam, it will create many difficulties for libraries because connecting libraries is an inevitable trend today. This activity is not only urgent for underdeveloped and developing countries but also very interested in developed countries such as the United States, New Zealand, Australia ...

#### **- Some connecting and information sharing models among libraries around the world and in Asia**

+ The Hong Kong Academic Library Link - HKALL is a project to promote information resource sharing implemented by the association of 8 university libraries:

- Chinese University of Hong Kong
- City University
- Hong Kong Baptist University
- Hong Kong Institute of Education
- Hong Kong Polytechnic University
- Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
- Lingnan University
- The University of Hong Kong

HKALL shares an electronic library software to its school members. HKALL is the focal library allowing all students and staff of 8 universities to use resources and share information resources with more than 5 million monographs available from 8 universities.

+ LCONZ (Library Consortium of New Zealand) is a conjugate of 4 university libraries:

- AUT University.

- Victoria University of Wellington.
- University of Waikato.
- University of Otago.

The aim of the LCONZ is to cooperate, exchange and distribute information resources and various types of information services with New Zealand universities, and to ensure that the students, staff and researchers of the New Zealand universities can access and use these resources and types of services.

+ AARLIN (Australian Academic Research Library Network) includes 08 major Australian university libraries that combine additional collaboration and share electronic resources, endogenous resources.

+ In the United States, a number of library consortia have been established to share information resources and collaborate in professional areas of expertise. In the library system of universities, it can be mentioned the Boston Library Consortium (BLC), including 16 university libraries, research institutes in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. This federation is established and aimed towards the directory information of sharing goal. The consortium member libraries can access to bibliographic information of over 25 million documents.

+ In Thailand, under the management of Thailand Ministry of Education, a number of associations have been formed and operated on a national scale, which aim at different purposes. ThaiLIS (Thailand Library Intergrated System) is a combination of libraries for the purpose of sharing electronic resources purchased from abroad.

#### **- The solutions for enhancing the ability of connecting and sharing information among Vietnamese libraries**

By studying the models and current status of library connection in Vietnam, according to the author, to strengthen the information sharing connection between libraries in Vietnam, it is necessary to focus on these main solutions as follows:

##### **+ Select the appropriate connecting and information sharing model**

By studying the collaborative library connection models in some countries and the worldwide also, it can be found that library connection models are not spread out but focus on libraries with many similar features, such as: Functions, Duties; Information Resources; Users, etc. This guarantees the feasibility and determines the effectiveness of the connection. With the current status of Vietnam, in order to enhance the information sharing connection among libraries, the solutions of building library model which plays a central role should be considered and applied. First of all, it is necessary to have a classification of Vietnam libraries, based on specified criterias. The result of the classification is to find out a group of libraries that have many similarities in functions, tasks, information resources, users, etc. and select the libraries with the best conditions as the central role (Central Library). The goal of establishing central libraries is to create a clue to link libraries. Central library will be the place that is responsible for concentrating library member with similar characteristics into a system, creating a link between members to build, share and together exploit the information resources, exchange and share professional issues in order to have the best and most effectively perform the tasks of each library.

Central Library plays a large role in helping member libraries improve their capacity to meet information needs by using the most of their existing capacities and expanding the resources that users can exploit; increasing the number of private users of each library; improving the convenience in exploiting and using resources effectively in order to reduce investment costs.

##### **+ Complete the mechanism of connecting and sharing information among libraries**

It can be said that the Vietnam Law on Library, which was passed through and enacted by the Congress in 2019, has created an important legal corridor for the connecting and sharing information among libraries. One of the many important new features of the law, compared to previous documents, is the library interconnection. Library interconnection is defined as one of the principles of library activity with more details in article 29 of chapter 3 of the Law on Library. However, for the law to be really put into the practice, it depends on many factors. The most important of which is the awareness from libraries themselves about the need to connect and share information in order to create overall power, in the context of having many changes in the library operating environment. The survey result in Figure 2 shows that only 8% of the surveyed libraries are connected domestically. This fact shows that many libraries are technically qualified but are not yet ready for connecting and sharing information. In the context of a changing operating environment, especially the transition to the knowledge management, libraries need to determine that connecting and sharing information is one of the most urgent solutions that decide the future development and assert its own role. Based on the contents of library interconnection in the Law on Library, libraries need to unify the regulations in details, on the basis of consensus of all participating members. This is a guarantee mechanism to connect and share information between libraries.

##### **+ Standardize management software systems**

Besides the mechanism problem, one of the other causes leading to 70% of the

surveyed libraries not being able to connect and share information with other libraries is technical problems. It should be acknowledged that many of the management software systems being used by libraries has yet to provide good functional support for libraries to connect. Through interviews with many system managers at libraries, their system cannot be connected directly to another system due to the standard incompatibility. From the above reality, in order to improve the connection between Vietnamese libraries, solutions for evaluating, upgrading, standardizing or replacing the management software systems in libraries are necessary. In the current context, libraries need to choose powerful management software systems that meet the standards not only to connect libraries together but also to interconnect with other statistics systems as well as social networks. Management software systems not only provide one-way information and knowledge from libraries to users, but also create a multidimensional environment for users to share information and knowledge into digital data warehouses shared in digital knowledge ecosystems.

#### 4. CONCLUSION:

Under the impact of digital transformation of library and information activities, libraries are transforming to the modern library model. This change is the general trend of libraries around the world as well as in Vietnam. In the context of applying science and technology, connecting and sharing information among libraries in order to create a total strength in the ability to provide information is inevitable. However, in Vietnam, the connecting and information sharing between libraries still reveals many limitations. There are many reasons for these limitations, and the overcoming of these limitations will help libraries in Vietnam develop sustainably and fulfill their roles well.

#### REFERENCES:

- I. Agnes Mainka, Sviatlana Khveshchanka (2012) "Digital Libraries as Knowledge Hubs in Informational Cities" Accessed on 5.09 - 2020, website: <https://www.researchgate.net>
- II. Henczel, S., Supporting the KM environment: The roles, responsibilities, and rights of information professionals. Accessed on 5.09 - 2020, website: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247677530\\_Supporting\\_the\\_KM\\_environment\\_The\\_Roles\\_Responsibilities\\_and\\_Rights\\_of\\_Information\\_Professionals](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247677530_Supporting_the_KM_environment_The_Roles_Responsibilities_and_Rights_of_Information_Professionals)
- III. Jotwani, D. (2008), Best Practices in a Modern Library and Information Center, Accessed on 15.8-2020, website <http://ir.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/1944/1223>.
- IV. Kimiz Dalkir. (2011), Knowledge Management in Theory and Practice. The MIT Press Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England
- V. Klaus Ceynowa (2016), Information in the Digital Knowledge Ecosystem – Challenges for the Library of the future, IFLA Publication, Berlin Germany.
- VI. The law No. 46/2019/QH14 - Law on Library (2019), The XIV Congress of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, passed on the 8th session, November 21, 2019.
- VII. [http://hkall.hku.hk/screens/hkall\\_2.html](http://hkall.hku.hk/screens/hkall_2.html)
- VIII. <http://www.lconz.ac.nz/about.html>